THE CALL LETTER

The Call Letter is the official publication of KTSB-Student Radio at the University of Texas at Austin

Volume 2 December 1988/January 1989 No. 4

IN THIS ISSUE:

KTSB with

Austin's

MEANING

Ireland's

IN TUA NUA

---

plus

On The Town

Record Reviews

and more!

THE CALL LETTER

Volume 2 December 1988/January 1989 No. 4

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austin's alternative

ktsb

91.7 cable fm

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The *Call Letter* is published monthly by ktsb. The opinions expressed herein are those of the individual writers and do not necessarily represent the views of the station.

The *Call Letter* always welcomes any submissions in the form of editorials, art, reviews and comments as long as they are accompanied by a name and phone number. If you are interested in interviewing bands, local or touring, please contact Greg Headley at the ktsb office. You can also get in touch with the editor at the same number, 471-5106.

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THE LATEST PLAYLIST

1. Fishbone	*Truth & Soul*	Columbia
2. They Might Be Giants	*Lincoln*	Bar None
3. Poi Dog Pondering	*E.P.*	Texas Hotel
4. Billy Bragg	*Workers Playtime*	Elektra
5. Jane's Addiction	*Nothing's Shocking*	Warner Bros.
6. Daniel Johnston	*Hi, How Are You?*	Homestead
7. Talk Talk	*Spirit of Eden*	EMI
8. Cocteau Twins	*Blue Bell Knoll*	Capitol
9. Michelle Schocked	*Short Sharp Shocked*	Polygram
10. Fast & Bulbous	*Compilation*	SST
11. Red Hot Chili Peppers	*Abbey Road E.P.*	EMI
12. Public Enemy	*It Takes A Nation*	Def Jam
13. Nice Strong Arm	*Mind Furnace*	Homestead
14. Richard Thompson	*Amnesia*	Capitol
15. Click Click	*Rorschach Testing*	Pias
16. Wire	*A Bell is A Cup*	Enigma
17. The Smiths	*Rank*	Sire
18. A. R. Kane	*69*	Rough Trade
19. Van Morrison	*Irish Heartbeat*	Polygram
20. Peter Tosh	*The Thought*	Capitol
21. Visions of Change	*Visions of Change*	Firefly
22. Tom Waits	*Big Time*	Island
23. Willie Dixon	*Hidden Charms*	Capitol
24. Iggy Pop	*Instinct*	A&M
25. Dream Syndicate	*Ghost Stories*	Enigma
26. Soul of TX Women	*Compilation*	Home Cooking
27. Chesterfields	*Crocodile Tears*	Household U.K.
28. C. J. Chevier	*Let Me In Your Heart*	Arhoolie
29. Half A Chicken	*Bird Dog*	Rabid Cat
30. Sugarcubes	*Life's Too Good*	Elektra
31. Jack The Tab	*Compilation*	Castalia
32. 17 Pygmies	*Welcome*	Island
33. Stay Awake	*Disney Compilation*	A&M
34. Yellowman	*Rides Again*	Ras
35. Bad Mutha Goose	*Bad Mutha Goose*	Fable
36. Balancing Act	*Curtains*	I.R.S.
37. King Missile	*Dog Fly Religion*	Shimmy Disc
38. Let's Active	*Every Dog Has Its Day*	I.R.S.
39. Eric B. & Rakim	*Follow The Leader*	Uni
40. Del Rubio Triplets	*3 Gals, 3 Guitars*	Cabazon
41. Jad Fair & Kramer	*Roll Out The Barrel*	Shimmy Disc
42. Tater Totz	*Alien Sleestacks. . .*	Giant
43. Weather Prophets	*Judges, Juries*	Relativity
44. Fred Lane	*Car Radio Jerome*	Shimmy Disc
45. Tailgators	*OK Let's Go*	Restless
46. M.D.C.	*More Dead Cops*	Radical
47. Wrong Stereotype	*Compilation*	Alternative Tent
48. Shriekback	*Go Bang*	Island
49. Hothouse Flowers	*People*	Polygram
50. B.A.L.L.	*Bird*	Shimmy Disc

The complete ktsb playlist can be found at the station.

Come January when Congress reconvenes, members of the House and Senate will vote on an act of concern to KTSB staff and listeners. The Child Protection and Obscenity Enforcement Act (S.2033, H.R.3889), as it is comfortably named, is aimed at blowing the child pornography industry wide open. Certainly a laudable goal—one which makes Congress members look good by fighting crime and porn for the folks back home. Despite its good intentions, the act has some disturbing little vagaries being pushed by conservatives like Strom Thurmond (R-South Carolina).

The proposed act includes provisions that would allow seizure of property should a person be found to have produced materials deemed "obscene." Those found distributing the "obscene" material also run the risk of having all property, real or personal, seized.

What does this have to do with KTSB? If it made you feel a little uneasy to hear that Congress has done away with the 12 a.m.-6 a.m. broadcasting safe harbor, then this sneaky little act should really raise your hackles.

Let's give it a local spin. If, for instance, Mark Weaver (Austin's own self-appointed moral watchdog) got hold of the latest Bad Mutha Goose record and decided to make "Texas" a public issue. Well, he'd have an easy case wouldn't he? The song is full of "obscenities" (I lost count of the F-word after it's sixth repetition). So let's say it goes to court. The judge could find the material obscene and if so could order seizure of all property, real or personal, including the offending record. That means each musician involved could potentially lose everything they own due to the vague wording of the act. Not only the musicians, but anyone found promoting or distributing the obscene material is liable as well. Goodbye Fable Records.

Now, you could argue that most controversial artists aren't worth anything anyway so what can be taken away? All musical and recording equipment for starters and then of course no label, independent or major, would ever touch them again. I don't think the big boys—Warner Bros., CBS, A&M—are willing to risk losing all their assets in the interests of musical freedom. Will the SSTs, Homesteads and Fables of the world be able to make it financially if they are fighting legal battles? If this bill passes, the door will be wide open for that artistic demon known as censorship. A dearth of alternative music would be felt as artists and record companies try to stay above water.

So let's do something about this! Take a few moments to write a letter (example shown) to Senator Phil Gramm (who plays a pivotal role in the upcoming vote) as well as Senator Lloyd Bentson and Representative J.J. "Jake" Pickle. All you have to do is let them know you oppose the act as it is now written. Take part in stopping the possibility of censorship before it begins.

Honorable Phil Gramm
370 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Lloyd M. Bentson, Jr.
Senate Hart Building, #703
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable J.J. "Jake" Pickle
242 Cannon House of Representatives Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

RE: The Child Protection and Obscenity Enforcement Act (S.2033, H.R. 3889)

As a resident of Texas I urge you to vote against the above mentioned act as it is now written. The inclusion of provisions which would allow for the seizure of any property deemed obscene could open the door to censorship of controversial artists and musicians. I feel this would violate my rights as an American citizen and threaten the freedom which we as a nation hold dear.

I believe the act should be re-written to specifically target child pornography as Senator Metzenbaumm has proposed. Please vote against this act and work towards an act which accurately targets the exploitation of children. Thank you.

JUST SAY NO!

This editoral supplement was submitted by Kerthy Fix.

THE KTSB-SIDE

Change. Change. Change. . . . .It seems that there are several changes to be made with our current programming schedule. First of all, Ken McKenzie, KTSB's programming director, states that the station will have limited air-time during the winter interim. ***From December 15-January 15, we will reduce our cablecasting to a daily free-form music mix from 12:00 noon to 3:00 a.m.*** Although it may be possible that some of the specialty shows may elect to continue their individual programming, it's safe to say that during this time you'll be able to hear a more alternative mix. Feel free to call the station at 471-KTSB for a daily description of our programming during the interim. . . . When we get back into full swing in January, more changes will be taking place, such as new programs, some new DJs and new regulations. Due to budget restraints, **Pacifica News** will no longer be part of our programming schedule in the spring. It seems that we are in desperate need of new equipment, and the managers of the station feel that the few precious dollars we have would be better spent on this area. However, the News Department will be airing their own locally-produced talk shows in Pacifica's place. . . . . As they say, less is more. You'll notice in this spring that we will have a reduced number of DJs on the air. Hopefully this will enable you to hear your favorite DJs more often. Also, we will have a reduction in cablecast hours from Sunday-Thursday, 7:00 am-3:00 am. The **KTSB Midnite News** team will begin to prepare two-minute excerpts Monday-Thursday nights to preview their expanded 15-minute program which can be heard each Sunday night at 12 midnight. And to think that some of you thought you were only coming back for school. . . . .As noted earlier in this issue, the one change that listeners will definitely hear (or should I say, not hear) is the recent FCC ruling regarding obscenity. Until recently, college radio stations have been able to use the FCC's consideration of these hours as a "safe harbor" (from those ears most easily offended) to broadcast/cablecast more liberal language in their programming. Thus listeners are less likely to hear any obscenity between midnight-6:00 a.m. next semester. Since the FCC wants "proof" that no sensitive ears are tuning in, the industry consensus seems to be that a more conservative ruling is on the way. As Ken says, "After all, how in the hell can you prove who's *not* listening?". . . . .With the new year, come new specialty shows for KTSB. Tune in next month to hear Alan Watts with his **East-West Philosophy Lecture Series** on Sunday nights at 9:00 p.m. with the **Poetry Show** moving back one hour to 10:00 p.m. We also plan to add more talk shows, including the **Jewish Talk Show**, weeknights at 6:30 p.m. On Saturday nights, tap into **Dance Tracks**, airing at 9:00 p.m. And finally, as a supplement to the Folk Show on Saturdays, we will begin to air a **British Folk Show** on Tuesday afternoons at 2:00 p.m. instead of the current show, Avant Garde Classical.

As always, flip on over to the KTSB-Side of your radio dial.

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ON THE TOWN

with Alexis Arnold

Prohibition has a new album out called *Flophouse*. This five-piece band, formed in 1987, includes ex-members of Glass Eye, Scratch Acid and Norvells. It contains eight songs originally written between 1920-1940. Each one is an interesting rendition worthy of a listen. "Digga Digga Do" is a great cover of one of my favorite happy little nonsense type songs and Sally Norvell adds a sultry aspect to Ann Miller's version of "Primitive Man" from *On The Town*. *Flophouse* was produced by Brian Curley and is released on Fortress Records.

Another case of the covers can be found in the new cassette by **Spy vs. Spy**. Two of Spy's members are ex-Killer Bees. They have put a new and interesting funk/reggae feel to the often-covered "Wild Thing" and also "Ain't No Sunshine."

Salem Tree is a fairly new band in Austin worthy of your attention. The five-piece band's eight-song cassette showcases their talent with typical electric instruments although their live shows incorporate a variety of acoustic instruments as well. The bass line of "I'm the Air" lends an early 80s New Wave feel to the song. But there are three more excellent songs worth mentioning on this cassette. "The Promise" shows off lead singer Diane's voice beautifully yet the two slower songs, "Sacrifice" and "The Altar", are the band's strongest moments. "The Altar" is my favorite on this cassette with its hypnotic melody woven with multiple harmonies, use of a violin, electric guitars and the voices of Diane and Clay. Salem Tree has a potential that has only yet to surface. When it does, we'll be better for it.

Last month **Joe McDermott** released his second cassette, entitled "Anything Is Possible" at Over The Rainbow. Joe charmed his multi-aged crowd with his extremely imaginative songs. Although his tapes are marketed for children, no one is immune to his cheery outlook portrayed in his songs. Joe has no problem casting a sentimental view of the explanation of nature's wonders from kangaroos to humans in "Spider Magic." He also can take you on a fun-filled adventure in "My Family Car Is A Helicopter." No doubt, this cassette will definitely chase away the gloomy monsters and make you feel like "Anything Is Possible."

Journey through Austin's best in local talent every Friday night at 7:00 p.m. with the **"Local Show."** The show would like to extends its thanks to *Oasis* magazine for underwriting last month. Tune in. The "Local Show" is truly a bountiful way to hear the latest in local talent.

If your band has a demo and is interested in having it heard on KTSB, please send a copy, with a contact name and phone number to:

Alexis Arnold
ktsb-austin's alternative
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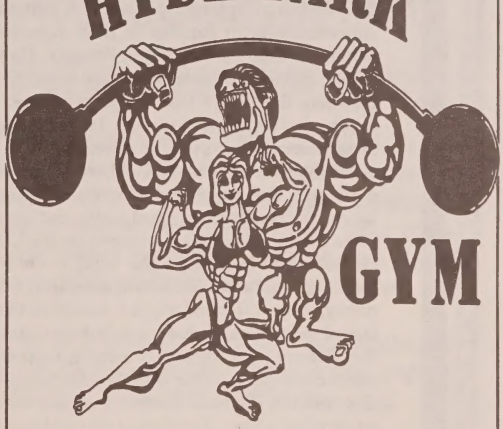

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IRELAND'S

IN TUA NUA

"Organized chaos" is how Martin Clancy, one of the founding members of In Tua Nua, best describes the seven-piece band from Ireland. Since 1983 the band from Dublin has been busy crafting their musical art and becoming, as someone once stated, the world's first post-punk neo-psychedelic folk-rock ceilidh band. Couldn't have said it better myself.

In Tua Nua consists of Clancy, guitar and backing vocals; Paul Byrne, drums and vocals; Leslie Dowdall, vocals; Jack Dublin, guitar; Matt Spalding, bass; Lovely Previn, violin and backing vocals; and Brian O'Briain on uilleann pipes, whistles and saxophone. If this line-up sounds intriguing on record, it's even more intriguing during their live shows.

Although they are quite popular in Ireland, the band is just starting to get their feet wet over here. Currently the band is wrapping up their first extensive North American tour in support of their American debut album *The Long Acre* on Virgin Records. Unlike a lot of bands, In Tua Nua seems to enjoy touring. As Leslie Dowdall, the band's lead singer confesses, "I always dreamed of being on a tour bus. I love playing live. It's better than say...working in a coal mine."

"We like touring, and everywhere we go we seem to get bigger and bigger crowds. Even though it takes longer, you build a more real audience," states Martin. If the album's encouraging success on the college radio charts is any indication, the band is on it's way to building a real audience here in the states. But unfortunately, when the band played Austin in October, the lack of promotion made for a very dismal audience turn out. Except for a handful of people, most everyone it seemed was not familiar with the band's music. Taking this in stride, the band nonetheless gave the lucky few an excellent show. The start of real audience indeed.

Back in the spring of 1983, In Tua Nua had yet to be fine-tuned into its current line-up of seven members. At the time, the band was a group of twenty or so musicians, which included Sinead O'Connor and Steve Wickman of The Waterboys at one point, who hung out together in Dublin. The band was originally formed by Clancy and Ivan O'Shea, who performs on the album and on a few numbers during their live shows, but who's now content being the band's production chief while on the road. After several months of extensive rehearsal, the band finally performed their debut concert. That evening, Bono of U2 and Jim Kerr of Simple Minds were in the audience. Both were duly impressed and the band was offered a deal to record a single for U2's record label, Mother Records.

When ready to sign a long-term recording contract in early 1984, the band was being courted by both Island and Virgin Records. "Due to the fact that we were under the impression that Island was this great independent record label we signed with them," explains Martin. But after more than a year of not doing anything, except for an album that apparently never saw the light of day, In Tua Nua decided to get out of their contract. "They weren't anything like we had imagined. We had a painful two years with them," he says.

So in early 1986 they went back to Virgin in England and were able to get a new contract with the label that was more than happy to sign the band. The following year, in April of 1987, they recorded *Vaudeville*, their first full-length album with Virgin. The album was both a critical and commercial success in their homeland winning several awards in Ireland's *Hot Press* Readers' Poll, including Best Debut Album of 1987 and Leslie being chosen as Best Female Singer. In the Best Album, Best Live Performance and Best Group categories, In Tua

CROSSES THE LONG ACRE

WITH DEBBIE FREEMAN

Nua placed second only to U2. Throughout the year, the band toured their homeland, and other parts of Europe, supporting the album.

While touring in Germany, the band met up with American producer, Don Dixon. Even though Dixon had produced such acts as R.E.M. and the Smithereens, Martin says the band is "very suspicious of people who have worked with several bands because it doesn't really mean anything. After you meet them, it's often the bands who are really good. But as a person, Don was really impressive."

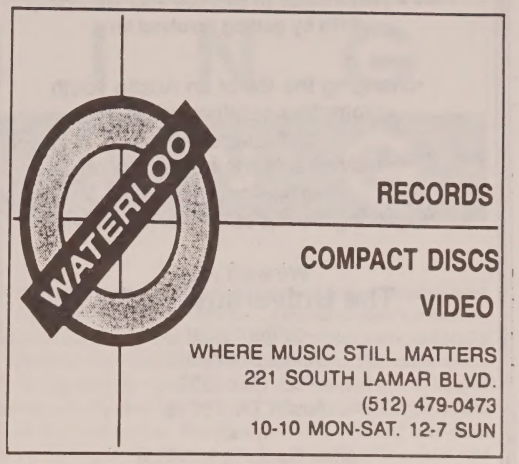
The band recorded two songs with Dixon while in Munich, "Sweet Lost Soul" and "Some Things Never Change," which are on the current album. Each one was so taken with the other that the band decided to use Dixon as their producer and immediately travelled to Reflection Studios in Charlotte, North Carolina. Since Dixon had never worked on an album for more than sixteen days before working with In Tua Nua, how long did it take to record *The Long Acre*?

"Three weeks," chimes Martin. Apparently it was this very aspect of Dixon's personality that appealed to the band. "He taught us a lot about music that we had either forgotten or that we never had the confidence to do, which was primarily that you should enjoy recording."

The Long Acre contains eleven songs, written primarily by Clancy and drummer Paul Byrne, evoking a wonderful blend of traditional celtic, folk and rock influences. Songs such as "All I Wanted," "The Innocent and the Honest Ones," and the band's personal favorite, "Wheel of Evil," prove that this young Irish band reflects heavily on their homeland in a desperate, yet hopeful, sense.

At a time when there seems to be an influx of bands who are trying to get a particular message across, whether it be political, religious, or otherwise, In Tua Nua does not make a conscious effort to try to change the world. Even though Martin explains that "The Innocent and the Honest Ones" is based on "one's sort of need for spirituality, but in the wake of seeing organized religion and how corrupt and far away it can be from one's own desires and needs," the band is clearly not about to presume to make decisions for anyone.

If the band does have any unwritten policies in regards to their musical direction, it is one of truth and purity. "Without getting too hippy-dippy," he continues, "it's a positive thing (the music). It's not so much a lyric thing, it's more of an escapism. That's about the only thing we're interested in." He hesitates in mentioning this during the interview "because it's so vague and bull-shitty, but it's true."



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KYLE JAMES FINDS

What, exactly, is "**meaning**"? From a lexical standpoint, it seems no one can come to a unanimous conclusion. Is it significance, connotation, import? An unusual word. One thing is certain, it is the name of an equally unusual duo based here, Austin's own MEANING.

"That's the reason we chose the name. In every dictionary I looked at, the definitions were all different. It seems no one knows exactly what it is," explained Tsunami, one half of the group, who now lives in the Boston area.

I talked with the band recently among the dull roar in Quackenbush's, hoping my tape recorder would distinguish between them, the seeming constant stream of semi's that passed outside and the general conversation of fifteen people who sat nearby. I had wanted to find out more about the band every since I heard their recently released tape "MEANING" at the station quite by accident while searching for some "Texas Music" to play.

"These guys aren't from Texas," was my first response.

But, indeed, Meaning is comprised of two Austinites, Kendall S. and Tsunami (really a former Austinite) who met back in 1980 and began to make music together.

"I met Tsunami through a mutual friend. He told me he was from another planet or something. I said this is who I want to work with!" exclaims Kendal.

Their first project together was called Triangle, Circle, Square. A little later, they joined a band called Happy Dagger, now better known as Miracle Room. Finally in 1986, they regrouped on their own to form Meaning. And about three months ago, they managed to edit 100 hours of music down to about 70 minutes and released a tape.

For those who like labels, it's been variously described as New Age Punk, Dark Age Punk Meditation, Jazz (Con)fusion, etc. by people who have heard the tape. When they asked me for a name, I couldn't give one. Their music is hard to tie down, impossible to pigeonhole. It undergoes several incarnations on the tape, from dark chords to free form guitar work to rhythmic drum patterns to industrial noise, with an Eastern feel.

"I think it's got a lot more heart than a lot of the industrial I've heard, maybe a little noise here and there, but not the purposes industrial music uses it for," the duo states.

And how do they create these dark landscapes, sometimes blissful, sometimes chaotic, always challenging? Surprisingly with very little, if any, pre-planning.

"We go into Kendal's living room, get everything going, tune the guitars (sometimes), and roll the tape. We don't even talk about i," explains Tsunami.

They will play for a period of time, then put the tape away. After several days, they come back to it and listen objectively. If they like what they heard, they might go in and do an overdub. So in effect, each piece is a small improvisation. And with no

MEANING

MEANING

formal knowledge of music theory, each comes from the heart.

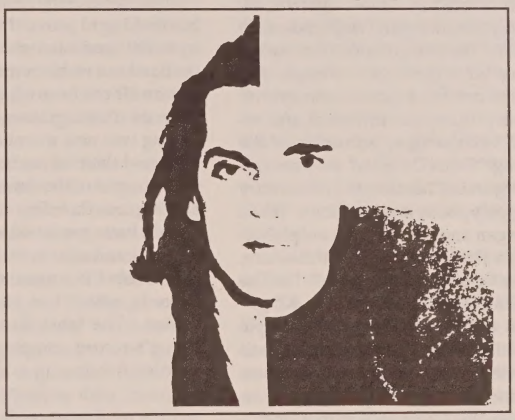
"We keep what works, we don't keep what doesn't. It's all very spontaneous," explains the band.

To hear the band one would not think of two guys jamming in the living room. For while the songs blend together and seem to be a homogenous entity, they all exhibit a solid structure, a firm foundation upon which they are built, something often missing from improvisational techniques.

Their recording techniques are no less astonishing. The tape quality is superb, like any tape recorded in a professional studio. The difference here is that all the original recording was done in Kendal's living room, on a two-track recorder. After they had what they wanted for the tape, it was balanced down at UT facilities, and the master was digitized, giving it the impeccable sound it possesses. No garage sound here.

When asked how each contribute to the sound, "We both do everything."

But when it comes to splitting hairs Kendal is the tweaker and knob controller and handles most of the guitar work, while Tsunami programs the drums, does the vocals and obtains the samples. They own a Casio SK-1 sampler, which enlarges their palette considerably. They take sounds from a variety of sources, voices, records, TV, shortwave, or anything in the room that sounds interesting. There are no limits.



Except, of course, if you count that pesky little nuisance, money. The band is completely self-financed, which has its up and down sides. It means with Meaning Production they have complete control over everything about their music. But it also imposes limitations, with equipments costs, times that can be devoted to it, etc.

"We're moving towards out-of-control. Because that's when more things show up. The more you control something, you choose the shit out of it and it dies. You let it get out of control, you don't know what it's going to look like but at least you're not doing to be bored," states the duo.

So Meaning has embarked on a marketing campaign. They are selling the tapes along with t-shirts with the Meaning logo and bumper stickers. They are hoping these will sell and enable them to take the next step forward--a compact disc release.

But Meaning has not been bound by this tape material or even this country's borders. A while back a friend of their's, a dancer, was interested in creating a dance video, which she specifically wanted to be circulated in the Soviet Union. She came to the band and gave these specifications. She wanted one to be able to dance to it, she wanted it exactly five minutes long, and she wanted it in two weeks. The piece, entitled "Grace," was completed at Freespace Studio here in Austin in less time than was allotted. Four copies of the completed video were then taken into the country. They were circulated underground and now lay in the hands of some high ranking Soviet artists, scientists, etc. It was also shown at the recent SXSW event and "Grace" is attempting to get some play on PBS stations. The band feels their music is very suited for visuals and hopes to explore this avenue in the future.

What else does the future hold? It seems wide open.

"We're going to see how this project (the current tape) is going to go and then get back in the studio for some more, with a fresh perspective. We've acquired some new equipment that is expanding our capabilities. We are shifting our consciousness and reality a lot, and probably our sound. But I don't think it will lose any of the qualities it has, we're just going to keep gaining,"Kendal says.

The future does look good for these two talented musicians with ideas to match. The tape is doing well and is not limited to the Austin area. Several record companies have expressed an interest in the band and they are hoping to find one who will allow them to take their own direction, not impose one upon them.

Meaning here denotates expression, feeling, motion, and again, meaning. They know what they want and certainly have the ability and know how to get it. Don't look for this "obscure" Meaning to remain that way for long.

MEANING's 70-minute tape is available at Waterloo, Sound Exchange and Antone's Records.

Bumper stickers, t-shirts and tapes are also available from:

MEANING World Headquarters
P.O. Box 115
2118 Guadalupe
Austin, TX 78705

Dead Can Dance **by Kyle James**
The Serpent's Egg
4AD

"Sometimes when one looks into beauty, one is left with a feeling of sadness."

Here Lisa Gerard, in speaking of the concept in general, has appropriately summed up the experience of *The Serpent's Egg*, the latest *opus magnus* from Dead Can Dance. Gerard and Brendan Perry have composed ten works, each one being an apotheosis of creative expression and insight.

The Serpent's Egg is the fourth LP from the duo, furthering their quest for the beauty inherent in themselves and the world around them. This time they are augmented by a third vocalist, David Sust, and a five-piece string section, composed of violins, violas and a violoncello; for the group refuses to be held under any constraints, musically or philosophically. Instruments such as the yang t'chin, accordion, hurdy gurdy, and water filled barrels have made appearances in their music. And of their ideas about music, it is something they embrace for a moment, they simply put in the colors that fulfill the feeling at the time. Lisa Gerard expounds, "You're just a faceted thing, that something passes through. If it creates pictures in your mind that's all it can do. Your imagination is more fruitful than any other form of picture you can possibly see." The aural pictures they paint are truly breathtaking.

Lisa Gerard's voice is unique, almost operatic, almost angelic, and always haunting and resplendent. In "The Host of Seraphim," the first composition, we are reintroduced. Along with the organ, strings, and sparse timpani, Gerard creates a sacred atmosphere, befitting a 14th century European cathedral and reflecting the title well, behooving an adoration of the highest angels. During "Orbis De Ignis" we hear an a capella chorus a la Gregorian Chants in an 11th century setting, yet exploring polyphony and harmony. While in "Severance," the organ and synth sing their plaintitive song and Brendan Perry bemoans "Indifference, the plague that moves throughout the land." "In The Kingdom Of The Blind The One-Eyed Are Kings" begins with a hypotic bell line, undercut by a simple organ progression while Perry rhetorically asks us to "no longer harbor grievances behind mask's opportunists façade" before the horns explode upon us culminating in our viewing "our chaos in motion."

And that's just part of side one!

The second side includes "Chant of the Paladin," a minimalistic medieval requiem and "Echolalia," an Eastern antiphony between Gerard and Susk, with almost pathological overtones, as evidenced by the title. "Mother Tongue" moves us to the continent of Africa, and to the true mother tongue, the primal evocations of the drum. And "Ullyses," with its flowing rhythms and mesmeric chord progressions, is an invitation, addressed to one but meant for all, to awaken, throw off our masks and depart, "Just like Ullyses, on an open sea, on an odyssey of self-discovery."

This leads to the antipodal vocal styles of Gerard and Perry. The former falls into the Elizabeth Frasier school of vocalization, where pure sound invokes emotion, there is meaning without concretion. She puts it best, "So I sing without words, because its not words that move you." Perry, on the other hand, is comprehensible in the conventional sense. The philosophical ideas explored and the allusions employed give evidence to his understanding and knowledge.

Dead Can Dance's music has always had a monumental aspect about it. It rests on granite structures, and ascends to the heavens, transforming and being transformed by all it touches. And yes, after listening to this album one is taken aback, even lowered, but it is the melancholia resulting from experiencing great beauty that touches your core, and the forced return from that plateau to the mundane after it's over. Yet the spirit was there and has left an indelible impression. For *The Serpent's Egg* transcends constraints, boundaries and time to leave a dynamic record of the process of creativity and the resulting effect. The album is a celebration of beauty.

Dream Syndicate **by Alex Kolesnik**
Ghost Stories
Enigma

Ghost Stories is the first Dream Syndicate album which has nothing to prove. *Days of Wine and Roses* had to live up to the band's live shows. *Medicine Show* had to show the band as a viable commercial prospect. *Out of the Grey* was an album from a band trying to show renewed life after its disintegration, with the added difficulty of having two new members. Steve Wynn and the band now find themselves back in a solid position as one of the strongest of the American underground rock bands. Having seen their first comeback shows in Los Angeles, I could have predicted as much.

The band also is in a good position as far as their record label is concerned. They are back on Enigma Records, which had released their first E.P. six years earlier. The label also distributes records for Steve Wynn's record company, Down There. So there was creative freedom in making the record. The band responded with a masterpiece, an album with songwriting reminscent of Bob Dylan, and the guitar power of the Rolling Stones classic, "Exile on Main Street."

The album starts out with "The Side I'll Never Show," a song which had become a central part of Wynn's solo acoustic shows around L.A. The acoustic shows have led to the development of the band to a simplier, more straightforward sound. Wynn has also formed The Steve Wynn Quartet, an acoustic band which features Chris Cacavas on accordian, Robert Lloyd on mandolin, and Mark Walton on acoustic guitar. That band has influenced the new album in many ways. Chris Cacavas, a longtime member of another popular L.A. band, Green on Red, has been added as the new keyboard player for the Dream Syndicate. His accordian on the album's centerpiece song, "My Old Haunts," adds an

eastern folk flavor to the song.

Robert Lloyd, best know as the rock critic for the *LA Weekly*, as well as the mandolin player for former L.A. band, the Romans, plays a gorgeous solo piano accompaniment to Steve Wynn's voice on "Someplace Better Than This." Seeing the Dream Syndicate live, one can hardly imagine the band doing a song with just piano and voice. The song is a direct consequence of Wynn's acoustic shows.

Ghost Stories also features "I Have Faith," a song co-written by Wynn and Concrete Blonde lead singer/bassist Johnette Nepalitano, who adds background vocals to the song. Nepalitano also added background vocals to "Dying Embers," a song on the previous album, *Out of the Grey*. She has had a longtime involvement wiht Steve Wynn, and she is a frequent guest at Dream Syndicate and Wynn shows.

A guest on classical guitar at Wynn's acoustic shows has been Paul B. Cutler, the lead guitarist for the Dream Syndicate. Cutler, who joined the band almost three years ago and has been largely responsible for the re-emergence of the band, has long been associated with the Dream Syndicate.

The guitarist for L.A. gloom rock band, 45 Grave, engineered the first E.P. for the Dream Syndicate and also produced the Danny and Dusty record, which featured Wynn and Green on Red lead singer/guitarist Dan Stuart, as well as drummer Dennis Duck of the Dream Syndicate, keyboardist Cacavas of Green on Red and now the Dream Syndicate, and guitarists Stephen McCarthy, Sid Griffin and Tom Stevens from the Long Ryders, a great L.A. band which has broken up this year. Besides Cutler's great production talents, he also is an amazing guitar player, whose pyrotechnic effects for solos on the album and live shows kick the songs into fifth gear.

The best song on the new record is "Whatever You Please," which features a wonderful three chord piano by Cacavas. It is strategically placed between two blistering songs. That kind of transition creates tension on the album which keeps the listener's interest through to the end. The end arrives too soon, with "When the Curtain Falls" closing out the album. The song has the same structure as "Whatever You Please," but the piano is now replaced with electric guitar and a loud guitar solo is put in. Then the last verse begins with the words: "And the audiences rush the stage/But who'll be there to meet their rage." The Dream Syndicate will.

The Vandals **by Kelly Shores**
Slippery When Ill
Restless Records

If a band's maturity can be measured by how much it has changed, then the Vandals have long since passed adolescence and should be collecting social security very soon. This band has changed. Their sound has changed and their attitude has changed. This becomes apparent upon simply looking at their new album cover. No longer do the covers represent violence (as does the M-16 on the cover of *Peace Through Vandalism*), or destruction (as the rubble of what was once L.A. on *When In Rome Do As The Vandals*); instead, they are looking mellow and oh-so-cool next to their Airstream on the cover of *Slippery When Ill*. This does not look like the band that would have conceived and brought to the world songs like "Anarchy Burger (Hold The Government)" or the driving punk anthem "The Legend of Pat Brown," and that's because this is not the same band—well, not completely.

Stevo, the original singer/up-front-dude has been replaced by David Quackenbush, whose influence has sent the band in a new direction. While he can still power out vocals like his predecessor, Quackenbush brings with him a certain country "twang" that distinctly changes the band's sound. *Slippery When Ill* sounds like what you would get if you mixed the Dead Milkmen, Soul Asylum and the Charlie Daniels Band. No kidding. They even sing songs with country and western subjects like drinkin' and drivin' trucks. "Elvis Decanter" is a good ol' cryin'-in-your-beer tune (it sounds nothing like their other tribute to the King: H.B. Hotel), and "Susanville" is a song about a messy, confused, and somewhat fickle truckdriver who sings: I think I've got a girl named Mary down in Susanville/Waitin' for me to come home and make her my wife/I know I've got a girl named somethin' down in Somewhereville/But I can't remember which to save my life.

Quackenbush does keep the Vandals' tradition of goofy, fun-time lyrics, but they certainly lack the drive they once had. This is especially true on "Clowns Are Experts (At Making People Laugh)," which is funny but just plain boring after the third listening. Even more lacking in drive is "The Completely Unnecessacry Remix of Ladykilla" (or something like that), which should have been called "We've Got Lots of Space On This Album To Filla" because it goes on forever. Not only is it entirely too long, but compared to the original, it isn't worth the plastic it's recorded on. Once again, no kidding.

This is not to say that Quackenbush is a bad influence on the band or lacks anything in the way of vocal ability. He has, in fact, a great stage presence and somewhat David Byrne mannerism which makes for an interesting live performance. He can also belt out the old Vandals in a way that would make even Stevo proud. But, with only a few exceptions, one could not tell by just listening to the album. One of these exceptions is their cover of the Charlie Daniels Band's "In America." Quackenbush and the whole band sound powerful, loud and tight. The cover is fairly straight, with the drums, vocals, guitars and just about everything else sounding like it has been cranked to full volume.

In an interview with *Flipside* magazine in November of 1982, the Vandals were asked why they had destroyed a studio at KNAC Radio in Los Angeles. Human (ex-bass player) replied, "Because we're punkers, dammit, we're the Vandals!" This may have been their attitude in 1982, but it's not the attitude of the band that recorded *Slippery When Ill* in 1988. This album is well worth a listen, but diehard Vandals fans will just have to die hard because they're not punkers, dammit, they're the Vandals!

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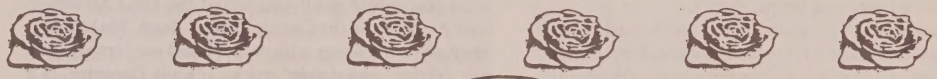

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Thursday Feature Albums

December 8
Dream Syndicate *Days of Wine and Roses*

December 15
Blue Oyster Cult *Secret Treaties*

December 22
Hybrid Kids *Claws*

December 29
Jesus and Mary Chain *Psychocandy*

January 5
Van Morrison *Astral Weeks*

January 12
Pere Ubu *Dub Housing*

January 17
Hüsker Dü *New Day Rising*

January 26
David Bowie *Lodger*

at 10:00 p.m. with Rob Forman